



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

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Letter from J [ohn] M. Vanderblit to John Muir, 1882 Aug 14.

John M. Vanderbilt

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Williamoo near Sitka Alaska
August 14th 1882.

My dear Mr. Muir

I have deferred writing to you from time to time with the hope that I could meet my note that falls due this month & as I am unable to do so I beg to enclose a draft on Messrs. DuBois & King #416 Battery Street San Francisco for Fifty Dollars \$50.00 being amount of interest (two years) due on same and beg that you will renew the same for another year or till such time as you can conveniently do so. I have been for the past two years very much cramped in paying interest, life insurance, Doctors bills etc and have had no income other than my salary with the N.W.C.

The first year the N.W.C. paid a stock dividend of 20%, last year paid expenses, while this year with a capital of \$100,000.00 to work on, every thing looks favorable for a profitable season. I regret my inability to pay you in full, which fact worries me

and I have given you therefore a simple statement of my condition.

We are now permanently located at this place where our oil works are established. We have a plain but comfortable little house and live in a quiet way - society of course is scarce, no other lady here but my wife - of white men there are seventeen; occasionally a white man or two will call in while out prospecting, once or twice a month the "Rock" calls, & once a month the "Idaho" thus we see new faces, being always busy we do not feel lonely - and as we are all in very good health we enjoy to a great extent living here.

The establishment is made up as follows; a factory building 40x40 with long guano & barrel sheds attached, powder house, seine & salt house, boarding house (the old store building) bleaching house, new two story store building & two cottages, a wharf in course of erection, Steamer "Favorite" as fishing boat, Steamer

launch "Louise" (whaling steamer, scow, fishing and whaling boats). The season commenced this month, we have taken five whales (humpback) in the past twenty days, but in herring fishing we have done little as yet as the fish have hardly commenced to school, the season will probably last till Xmas. I went on both whaling trips when the above whales were caught and the hunt was a grand & exciting one. For the past month I have been prospecting for fish up & down the channels from Chilcoat to Prince Frederick Sound & found many new coves & interesting facts. I would enjoy your company here very much indeed & feel that you would be interested in what there is to be seen hereabout.

The town of Harrisburg is now named Juneau and is quite a flourishing town with a wharf, many good frame buildings (for such a wild place) & three small quartz mills. San Francisco capitalists are gradually buying

up the quartz locations and at the same time very little is being done towards opening up the various ledges. They will wait I presume till prospect is gained of every thing of value.

The placers are quite extensive and some pay quite handsomely, about 300 men are thus employed - we have a large store there and do the bulk of the trade which is quite considerable. McSpahn remains here most of the time.

Three separate parties of men have gone into the interior country by way of Chilcoot this summer to prospect for gold most of them provisioned to remain there till next year, they are mostly new miners in the country recently arrived from Arizona & other places provided with money & determined to find gold if it is in the country. The two last parties employed 125 Indians to pack outfit over the divide to the lake beyond - a distance of about 25 miles from salt water.

One of the brothers named Krause from Germany sent out here in scientific research, returned home by the June steamer, the other brother is still at Chilcoot where he will remain till fall, his labors are devoted to the peninsula between the Chilcoot & Chilkah inlets and adjacent country.

I have seen Brother Young once this season when I made a short trip with him on the mail steamer from this place to Sitka - he was then bound for Cordova Bay to establish a brother missionary among the Kiydah Indians, I received a letter from him by the last steamer in which he described a seal hunt on the ocean in which he had taken part. I expect him here sometime this fall to witness a whale hunt, you know he is very fond of sport of that kind.

We often speak of you and enjoy very much your articles in *Corpus* & trust that we will some day meet you again & make the acquaintance of

your loving family. My wife joins me
in best of wishes to you & yours
Sincerely Yours
J. M. Vanderbilt

I have often thought of the prediction you
made in regard to gold discoveries
in this country & have frequently,
since the opening of the Jarman ledges,
referred to it.

Have you received my letter of last year
addressed to you at Donalds Ka, it
has not been returned to me?
J. M. V.